Educational Strategic Plans in Nigeria: Challenges of Implementation and Ways Forwards

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the challenges facing implementation of educational strategic plans in Nigeria. Secondary data was used to support the points raised in the article. The secondary data were sourced from print material and online publication by recognized institutions and individual author. The article identified inadequate funding, poor planning, poor relationship between planners and implementer, weak administrators, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of political will, institutional corruption, inadequate personnel and insecurity. To address, the following measures were suggested: adequate funding, sound planning, positive relationship between planners and implementers, appointment of qualified administrators, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, development of positive political will, fight institutional corruption in the education sector, ensure security of schools and employment of more professional teachers.

Keyword: Challenges, Educational institutions, Strategic plans, Implementation.

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria has a federal system of government with 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. Within the states, there are 744 local governments in total. The country is multilingual, and home to more than 250 different ethnic groups. The languages of the three largest groups, the Yoruba, the Ibo, and the Hausa. The Nigerian government have adopted education as a means to the realization of the social, economic, technological and political development.

Nigeria's vision of education as an instrument for national development is reflected in the National Policy on Education, which states that "no nation can rise above the quality of its education system." The Government relies on education as a springboard for its development and reform agenda. Thus, five main national objectives have been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education:

- (a) To build a free and democratic society;
- (b) To build a just and egalitarian society;
- (c) To build a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (d) To build a great and dynamic economy;
- (e) To build a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

To achieve the above objectives and goals of education in Nigeria, the Nigerian government designed and established their educational system. According to NEEDS (2014), The National Policy on Education defines the structure of Nigeria's education. The published document of the Policy consists of 13 sections that cover critical issues about the educational sector. As stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2013), basic education covers nine years of formal (compulsory) schooling consisting of six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education. Post-basic education comprises three years of senior secondary education in either an academic or technical stream. In the tertiary level, the system consists of the university, polytechnic and college of education subsectors.

For effective administration, management and regulation of the educational system, the Nigerian designed and formulated National policy on education for the administration and management of education in Nigeria. According to NEEDS (2014), Nigeria's National Policy on Education was released in 1977. It was revised in 1981 to ensure that the policy addressed the perceived needs of the Government in power and also to ensure that the education sector was supportive of government development goals. In 1990, the Government once again acknowledged the need to review and update the policy, following political changes that saw the reintroduction of democracy in the country. The latest edition of the policy was published in 2013.

The Nigerian government in different times have come up with different economic plan that encompasses education. Some of these plans includes the Vision 20:2020 which is Nigeria's blueprint for economic transformation. Launched in 2003, it is Nigeria's long-term development agenda aimed at repositioning Nigeria to become one of the 20 largest economies in the world by the year 2020 (National Planning Commission, 2009a). The National Vision of Nigeria expresses the country's aspiration to improve the quality of life of its people through the development of an information- and knowledge-based economy,

which the people can use to gain social, economic and educational benefits, and fulfill their potentials. The vision is all-encompassing and recognizes the need to develop not only economically but also for transformation and advancements in the social, political, educational and cultural aspects. To attain the overarching goal of reaching the top 20 economies by year 2020, the Government realized the need to enhance development in key sectors such as education. In education, the goal is to develop a modern and vibrant education system that will give every Nigerian the opportunity and facility to achieve his or her maximum potential and provide the country with adequate and competent manpower.

In 2009, the Federal Ministry of Education published the *Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector*. This was developed to address issues in the education sector related to mismanagement and inadequacy of resources commensurate with national needs, population growth and demand. As a result of these challenges, education as a strategic priority of the Government has not been well positioned as a transformational tool and a pillar for socioeconomic empowerment and development (FME, 2009). *Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector* outlines improvement and turnaround strategies for each of the subsectors of education, namely basic, post-basic and tertiary. The plan is to use a representative sample of schools and institutions across the country as demonstration projects (NEEDS,2014).

In 2016, the Federal Ministry of Education prepared the Ministerial Strategic Plan 2016-2019 (MSP), which is built around the three results areas of access, quality, and systems strengthening; and is comprised of ten pillars, the first of which focuses on out-of-school children. The MSP affirms that the security and stability of the country hinge to a large extent on its ability to provide functional education to its citizens, and that no nation can achieve economic prosperity without a sound and functional education system. The Government's expectations in terms of the MSP's impact are manifold: tackling the issue of out-of school children by creating opportunities and providing incentives; bridging the gender gap in enrolment, retention, and completion by addressing the problems of girl-child education; improving pupils' learning achievements, including literacy and numeracy; and, addressing the crisis of inadequate and low quality teachers with training, re-training, and recruitment. In addition, the MSP aims to prepare Nigeria's youth to take competitive advantage of the 21st century knowledge-driven economy within and outside the country; address the issues of quality and access to higher education and improve the global ranking of Nigeria's tertiary institutions; and, resolve the skills gap by deploying a workable and comprehensive technical and vocational education and training policy. The Ministerial Strategic Plan was aims to strengthen the education system overall by "improving evidence-based decision making that will assist transparency, governance, accountability, and innovation in education delivery". In short, the Ministerial Strategic Plan is the Government's vision for the education sector as a whole and confirms its commitment to its reform (UNICEF, 2017).

The Ministerial Strategic Plan is a strategy document that defines activities to be implemented by various Federal as well as State-level actors and programs, notably the UBE program when it comes to basic education reforms. The Ministerial Strategic Plan was adopted by the National Council on Education, but its national goals have not yet been translated to State-level goals and activities. In addition, costing of foreseen interventions has only been completed for Federal activities – and to date, no budgetary allocations have been made towards these activities. The MSP includes several activities, e.g. expansion of school infrastructure, which it tasks UBEC with. However, the Ministerial Strategic Plan also contains some activities that are related to reforming the UBE program and UBEC's operations. These activities relate to, for example, decreasing the counterpart funding from States, in order to facilitate States' access to the Federal matching grant earmarked for the financing of school infrastructure. The MSP does not, however, fundamentally reassess the UBE program as a whole and UBEC's achievements to date (UNICEF, 2017).

The Nigerian government is known for developing the best policies, programme and plans but implementing it have always been the problem. Planning, supervision and monitoring mechanisms for the entire education system have been very weak. Management problems within the system have been cited often as a factor that impacts negatively on the success of projects that have been supported by international development agencies (Moja 2000). According to (UNICEF,2017) Nigeria is a policy-rich environment but poor in implementation. The capacity and commitment of the government to implement educational policies and processes have been limited due to inadequate resources and political will. Based on this submission, this paper examines the challenges facing the implementation of strategic plans on education in Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Education Strategic Plans

Educational strategic plan refers to a planned educational document containing strategic ways of implementing educational programme. Educational plans or strategic plan action is an organized documents for implementation of educational programme. Fides (2015) cited Mittenthal (2002) strategic plan is a tool that provides guidance in fulfilling a mission with maximum efficiency and impact. If it is to be effective

and useful, it should articulate specific goals and describe the action steps and resources needed to accomplish them. Fides (2015) cited Bryson (2011) view strategy as a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose. It is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does and how it does it with a focus on the future. These days there is an increasing need for effective and efficient development of strategic plan for secondary schools. Many organizations around the globe have also started taking interest in developing strategic plans because many policies and programmes which they initiated at different times have failed them. Introducing strategies and plans have been to acquire quality education and improve standard and bring the school to effective self-management. A school's strategic plan is the physical document that embodies the guiding orientation regarding how to manage the school within a larger national and local development perspective. Such a plan can lead to school effectiveness, improvement and development when properly implemented.

Fides (2015) cited Chang (2008) who defined strategic plan as a living document that includes policy direction, implementation strategies, actions and benchmarks for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the expenditure framework which allows adjustments in areas for developments during implementation. This plan entails the school's analysis of its strategic issues for development, prioritization, planning to address such issues and, finally, implementing a plan to address these identified issues for development. Wilkinson (2011) identifies these reasons why organizations must develop plans. It is to set direction and priorities; to get everyone on the same page; to simplify decision-making; to drive alignment and to communicate the message. Developing a workable strategic plan means dissecting the organization's objectives and strategies and determining which takes precedence. Strategic plan becomes a management tool that serves the purpose of helping an organization to do a better job, because a plan focuses the energy, resources, and time of everyone in the organization in the same direction.

2.1 Concept of Educational Implementation

Implementation is the systematic ways of executing programme, policies and project. Implementation is the act of carrying out a planned actions and programme. Implementation is the stage by stage of carrying out a defined and planned programmes.

3.0 Challenges of Implementing Educational Plans in Nigeria

The following have been identified as the challenges facing the implementing educational strategic plans in Nigeria. Inadequate funding, poor planning, poor relationship between planners and implementer, weak administrators, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of political will, institutional corruption, inadequate personnel and insecurity.

3.1 Inadequate funding

Inadequate funding is the bane to poor implementation of educational strategic plans in Nigeria. The implementation of educational plans or programme is very expensive. Inadequate funding is one of the major challenges affecting the implementation of education plans in Nigeria. The major issue in educational development is shortage of funds. One of the most serious problems threatening the survival of the educational systems is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of education. This shortage of funds affects job performance and the growth of the institution. Educational institutions cannot perform optimally without funding. This situation calls for increased fund initiative from both the government and educational stakeholders so as to sustain the tempo and growth of education industry. The inability of the Nigerian government to objectively accept and implement the 26% funding formula for education recommended by the UNESCO impact negatively on the performance and sustainability of education. Thus, it has become obvious that Nigeria's neglect of the funding formula is detrimental to educational institution performance and development aspiration as quality performance is the veritable instrument for sustenance of education system. This neglect has further precipitated crises in the entire educational systems as effective teaching, research and service are no longer taking place seriously. The educational institution are in need of money to carry out their programmes and to cater for their capital and recurrent needs. The budgetary allocation for the entire educational system have been cut back from year to year by the federal government. This cut back has affected both capital and recurrent expenditures. The Government has faced considerable challenges to implement the 2016 budget, beginning with delays in its approval, as well as actual revenues falling well short of budget targets. The latter is partly due to the slowdown in the economy as well as unrealistic targets for non-oil revenue and inadequate policy measures to mobilize revenues.

3.2 Poor Planning

Poor planning of educational strategic plans or documents is also another problem responsible for poor implementation of education strategic plans in Nigeria. Poorly planned educational programme will be difficult to implement. Many educational strategic plans in Nigeria have been abandoned because of poor planning. Ololube, (2013) submits that there is a popular saying that "he or she who has failed to plan has planned to fail". Education planning in Nigeria has always been inadequate in line with the enormous facing our educational system. The lack of effective planning poses a significant obstacle to the advancement of education across the country. The success of any educational system hinges on proper planning. Planning of

human and material resources has evolved to guide the allocation and utilization of educational resources in the school systems. Such planning is required to arrest areas of wasted resources and to make educational production more successful. Consequently, for any educational system to truly develop, effective planning is indispensable as education and planning are essential characteristics for effective education. Otive (2017) observes that there is no systematic planning framework for the country that ensures that adequate data and research, good information system, monitoring and evaluation and tracking of results. The end result is abandonment of projects, poor plan implementation and poor service delivery. For instance, it has been documented by the Presidential Assessment Committee report that 11, 886 projects worth N7.7 trillion have been abandoned across the country denying citizens of the benefits.

3.3 Poor Relationship between Planners and Implementer

The poor relationship between the educational planners and plan implementers is another factors responsible for poor implementation of education strategic plans in the Nigerian educational sector. Educational planners planned the education programme without the involvement of the implementers. The implementers lacks the technicality and methodologies and approaches adopted in developing the educational plan. So, the implementation of such educational plans will be very difficult since they are out of the plan actions. Noun (2007) hold the view that most of the planners, are not given enough freedom to implement their plans. In most cases, the process of plan implementation is carried out by people who did not participate in planning the programmes. Consequently it becomes extremely difficult for the planner to successfully evaluate the progress made in the implementation of the plans in order to determine areas that require modification. This is one of the crucial reasons why some educational programmes in the country are not successfully or fully implemented. Another noticeable problem of effective educational planning is the gap between planners and the implementers. So far the gap is still wide between the planners and the implementers, it will continue to serve as a barrier to successful educational planning. But in cases where such gap has been closed, and both the planners and implementers work hand-inhand, progress, improvement, success will continually be experienced. There will be positive progress report and mountains of problems and difficulties will be surmounted. On the whole, there is the need to ensure that the wide gap between the planners and implementers is closed so as to prevent further barrier to educational planning.

3.4 Weak administrators

Another problem affecting the implementation of the education strategic plans or action plans on education in Nigeria is the problem of the weak administrators appointed by the government to head educational institutions saddles with the responsibilities of implementing various educational programme or plans of the government. Some of these Directors, Chief executive or DG are not qualified, do not have the experiences and knowledge to support and achieve the implementation of educational plans within their institutions. Ogunode (2020) submitted most administrators appointed by the government to oversee the affairs educational institutions in the country are less qualified to hold that position. Most of the people are not professional in the field of education, they lacks the educational administration and management skills and abilities to manage so institution to an enviable end.

3.5 Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Inadequate infrastructural facilities is one of the major challenge preventing effective implementation of education strategic plans in the Nigerian educational institutions. To implement some government educational plans require huge infrastructural facilities which is not available in many of the educational institutions across the country. Infrastructural facilities are very important for the implementation of educational programme. There are inadequate infrastructural facilities in all the Nigerian educational system Noun (2010) submits that there is an unprecedented infrastructural dilapidation at the national, state, local and institutional levels in Nigeria. It may be difficult to implement any educational policy or plan effectively with the situation on ground. The school facilities and equipment are in total disrepair at all levels of education. The school buildings are collapsing, the ones still standing are either with leaking roofs or no windows and doors. Most schools have few good chairs and tables left for the use of teachers and ever increasing enrolment. Many schools have no library, workshop and science laboratory. Students are only exposed to practical classes in the sciences when final examinations are approaching. Many schools are not connected to electricity and water, and even where they do, the services are either epileptic or hardly provided.

3.6 Lack of Political Will

Another problem facing the implementation of educational strategic plans in Nigeria is lack of political will to support the implementation. Many political office holder lacks the political will to implement the past administration educational plans or programme due to different in political party. According to UNICEF,(2017) Nigeria is a policy-rich environment but poor in implementation. The capacity and commitment of the government to implement educational policies and processes have been limited due to inadequate resources and political will. Nigeria Poor funding environment, weak governance and financial management, and low capacity may adversely impact on program implementation. Based on this submission, this paper examines the challenges facing the implementation of educational strategic plans in Nigeria.

3.7 Institutional Corruption

Institutional corruption is another challenge facing the implementation of education strategic plans in Nigeria. Otive (2017) corruption is widespread and endemic in Nigeria. But we know that the problem of corruption is as old as society itself and cuts across nations, cultures, races and classes of people. It is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of our times leading to underdevelopment and poor service delivery in Nigeria. Corruption has a lot of negative consequences on every sphere of societal development whether social, economic or political. Corruption not only leads to poor service delivery but loss of lives. Corruption is pervasive in Nigeria with serious negative consequences. Osunyikanmi, (2018) opines that Nigeria has been experiencing underwhelming development amidst overwhelming corruption. Education is not insulated from this malaise. Corruption allows a high percentage of the funds allocated to the sector to get diverted into the private accounts of public officials. Hence, the amount being spent on education is much lower than the figure in the budget. The Corruption Perception Index 2016 revealed that Nigeria had a score of 28. The score ranges from 0 for the highly corrupt to 100 for the least corrupt. The country occupied the 136th position among the 176 countries ranked. Concerted efforts are required to tackle corruption so that development will not elude Nigeria. Ololube, (2016) revealed that the declining quality of Nigerian higher education is as a result of inadequate funding. Similarly, education funds misappropriation and mismanagement is a major reason for the deteriorating quality of Nigerian higher education. The study recommended that adequate funds should be made available for public institutions of higher learning, corruption and embezzlement should be reduced to the barest minimum.

3.8 Personnel

The human resource is another important element in the implementation of education strategic plans or strategic plan for education. The human resource comes in different professionals. Professional teachers, evaluators, monitors and managers, administrators, accountant, statisticians and educational planners. The experiences, knowledge, abilities, skills and qualifications matters in the implementation of the educational plans. The qualities and quantities in the availability of these professionals matters implementation processes. Osunyikanmi, (2018) observed that the statistics obtained from the Human Development Index of 2016 revealed that Nigeria did not have sufficient qualified teachers in primary schools. Only 66 percent of teachers in Nigerian primary schools were trained to teach. That is, about two out of every five teachers in Nigeria were not qualified to teach pupils. Education is in disarray as people without requisite skills are being employed to transfer knowledge to hapless children. Junaid (2013) disclosed that while 9.1 million teachers are needed between 2008 & 2015 to achieve Education For All (EFA), teacher requirement projections between 2005 and the same Y2015 is far below this future need. A total of 7.2 million new teachers are also expected to replace teachers leaving their post either on retirement or outright leaving for greener pasture. Independent (2019) submits that the national personnel audit on basic education delivery in Nigeria has revealed a deficit of about 277,537 teaching staff. The 2018 National Personnel Audit (NPA), conducted by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), on public and private basic education schools in Nigeria, was officially launched. According to the report, there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficit in primary schools and 2,446 shortage in Junior Secondary Schools across the nation (Independent, 2019).

3.9 Insecurity

Insecurity is another factor that is contributing to slow implementation of education strategic plans in the Nigerian educational sector. Many plans actions develop by the federal, states and local government towards developing the educational sector have been frustrated due to the insecurity challenges facing the country especially the Northeast Nigeria. Many educational programme like safe school initiative, girl child education, women education and universal basic programme have been slow down by the various forms of insecurity problem facing the country. According to the thisday (2018) the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) says Boko Haram has killed 2,300 teachers in Nigeria's northeast since the start of the insurgency in 2009. In the 2018 UNESCO global education monitoring report (GEM), the UN agency said 19,000 teachers have been displaced in the region, affecting access to education. "In north-eastern Nigeria, as of late 2017, there were 1.6 million IDPs, including an estimated 700,000 school-age children, as a result of violent attacks on civilians by Boko Haram, which began in 2009 (UNOCHA, 2017b)," the report read in part. "Boko Haram has destroyed nearly 1,000 schools and displaced 19,000 teachers (HRW, 2016). Reports indicated it had killed almost 2,300 teachers by 2017 (UNOCHA, 2017a). "The latest education needs assessment found that out of 260 school sites, 28% had been damaged by bullets, shells or shrapnel, 20% had been deliberately set on fire, 32% had been looted and 29% had armed groups or military in close proximity." The insecurity challenges is preventing effective monitoring and evaluation of educational institutions across the country. Osunyikanmi, (2018) the insurgency masterminded by Boko Haram has persistently taken peace away from north-eastern Nigeria. The problem singly accounts for over 60 percent of 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria. Majority of the affected children live in the hotbed of the crisis. Next, inadequate school infrastructure results in the high number of school children allocated to each teacher. The current ratio of 38 pupils per teacher creates an atmosphere that is not conducive for learning. This is a deviation from global best practice.

3.10 Policies Instability

Policies instability is another challenge preventing effective implementation of educational plans in Nigeria. Noun (2010) observed that in Nigeria, government and educational management structures are overbureaucratic. The federal ministry of education has the highest number of departments and agencies. In some situations, functions are duplicated, which could lead to confusion and conflict. Sometimes government activities are too centralized to give effective direction to policy implementation. All these could lead to ineffectiveness and lack of decisive action. Situations like this could lead to inconsistency of educational policies. According to Aghenta (2003), many educational plans have been abandoned before they are ready for implementation due to inconsistent directives and counter-directives from government ministry and its many agencies. You will remember the policies of school takeover and hand-over between federal and state governments in the past, as well as between states and religious bodies.

4.0 Way Forward

The Nigerian government must prioritize education in its drive towards the achievement of the educational objectives. Plans must be succinctly outlined and effectively implemented with the objective of bringing education in Nigeria to a global standard (Noun, 2010). The following measures have been recommended for a successful implementation of educational plan in Nigeria; adequate funding, sound planning, positive relationship between planners and implementer, appointment of qualified administrators, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, political will, fight institutional corruption, ensure security of schools and employment of more professional teachers.

4.1 Adequate funding

To effectively implement strategic plans of education in Nigeria require a lots of funds. So, the government should increase the funding of education. Osunyikanmi, (2018) submitted that funds allocated to education must be raised to a minimum of 15 percent of total expenditure at the federal level. Also, the 36 state governments must be ready to commit 15 percent of their states' annual expenditures to education. Libraries must be stocked with the newest editions of books. School laboratories must be properly equipped. Funds must be adequately provided for research by the country's universities. Nigeria is currently being underserved by its 153 universities. Private sector organizations should be incentivized to establish more universities to absorb qualified students that are unable to get university admissions because of limited space. The Federal Government is advised to monitor standards as the number of institutions increases.

4.2 Sound Planning

Planning is very important in the development of education .Planning helps to give direction to the educational programme. So, the government should ensure educational planners plan the education well. The government should provide the tools needed by educational planners. Moja (2000) recommends that institutional and system planning is critical for the restoration of quality in the system. The plans developed must be linked to realistic budget plans. Through planning, issues of uncontrolled growth in the number of students, programs, and institutions, could be addressed. Regional and national development needs could be met through regional collaboration as well as by improvement of efficiency of the system.

4.3 Positive Relationship between Planners and Implementer

The government should ensure educational planners and plans implementers are brought together with the purpose of working together in designing plan action document. This will lead to a smooth implementation of educational plans by the implementers.

4.4 Appointment of Qualified Administrators

Leadership is very important in the educational institutions. Leaders that must heads educational institutions must be professional and competent. The government should ensure competent people are appointed to head educational institutions across the country.

4.5 Provision of Adequate Infrastructural Facilities

Infrastructural facilities is very important in the implementation of educational strategic plans. Infrastructural provide the aids to the realization of educational goals. So, the government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities to all the Nigerian educational institutions.

4.6 Political will

The government and especially the political officeholders should develop positive attitudes towards the implementation of educational plans in the country.

4.7 Fight Institutional Corruption

The government should use all its anti-corruption agencies to monitor the educational institutions. This will help to reduce diversion of educational funds into private pocket. Osunyikanmi, (2018) recommend that the public procurement system must be strengthened so that fraudulent practices of public officials are effectively nipped in the bud. Corruption must attract heavy penalties. A transparent society will ensure that developmental projects receive value for every naira spent.

4.8 Ensure Security

The government should provide adequate security in the country and ensure educational institutions are well protected from insurgence and kidnappers

4.9 Employment of Professional Teachers

The government should employ more professional teachers and deploy them to all the educational institutions across the country. The government should design strategic manpower plan to aid effective manpower production in the country. Teacher welfare is an important attribution to educational development. Teachers should be trained and incentivized, including paying the salary regularly.

5.0 Conclusion

Strategic plans is very implement in the realization of educational objectives in Nigeria. Strategic plans developed for implementation of educational programme in Nigeria have not be fully implemented due to many challenges. The article identified: inadequate funding, poor planning, poor relationship between planners and implementer, weak administrators, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of political will, institutional corruption, inadequate personnel and insecurity. To address, the following measures are expedient in the implementation of educational strategic plans to drive delivering of quality education: adequate funding, sound planning, positive relationship between planners and implementers, appointment of qualified administrators, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, development of positive political will, fight institutional corruption in the education sector, ensure security of schools and employment of more professional teachers.

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